

"Thurber" to be presented

October 9, 1979

"Do you think things are getting better?" a woman asked me not long ago at a party.

"Madam," I replied, in my courtly but slightly edged fashion, "things will take care of themselves. What I am interested in is people."

James Thurber "Lanterns and Lances"

The life and art of James Thurber will be presented in a one-man show starring William Windom at 8 p.m. Friday, October 19, in the Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

Admission to the performance is \$5.50 for the general public and \$3.50 for students.

When Thurber joined the staff of a popular new magazine called The New Yorker in 1927, he was an up-and-coming young writer from Ohio. Ironically, he was hired as a full-time editor, but when Thurber began deliberately making mistakes while editing articles, his boss realized that Thurber was bound and determined to write, even if it meant resorting to sabotage.

As soon as the adjustment was made, Thurber began producing articles and drawings which eventually filled dozens of books. His pieces have been translated into 21 languages. And, though his characters were said to resemble "unbaked cookies" by Thurber's friend and admirer Dorothy Parker, even Matisse himself was an admirer of Thurber's art.

Thurber's prose was called "as unexpectedly conquering as a second vodka martini" by the New York Times Book Review. He created and populated his own literary world with feckless and bewildered men, relentless women and innocuous hounds, and someone once suggested that the word "thurber" be introduced into the English language to describe the approach to life and to the plight of the common man that was distinctly Thurber's.

William Windom won an Emmy for playing Thurber in the 1969-70 television series, "My World and Welcome To It." As a long-time fan of Thurber's, Windom's interest in the man was sparked when he did the series.

To prepare for the one-man show, Windom has read about 90 percent of Thurber's published works and he has corresponded with Thurber's widow, Helen.

"The re-reading necessary for memorization has unearthed additional nuggets of delight and style and selective workmanship that have completed my total enslavement to the way in which the mind of this man worked," Windom said.

Of course, not everyone has been won over by Thurber's eccentric charm. One unimpressed biographer wrote:

Thurber's life baffles and irritates the biographer because of its lack of design. One has the disturbing feeling that the man contrived to be some place without actually having gone there. His drawings, for example, sometimes seem to have reached completion by some other route than the common one of intent. The biographer who wrote these observations was James Thurber.

"Thurber" is sponsored by the University Events Office. Tickets can be purchased at the UCSD Central Box Office, 452-4559.

For more information contact: Leslie Franz, 452-3120

TO THE EDITOR: William Windom is available for telephone interviews prior to October 19. He will be in town October 19 and interviews can be arranged. Phone Leslie Franz for details.

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